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"Ethnic Cleansing in Darfur: A New Front Opens in Sudan's Bloody War"

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. Over the years, this Committee has shown great interest in Sudan, and it has influenced more constructive change than you will ever know. The Committee has called hearings at critical times to say what the world needs to hear. Yet again, this hearing could not be better timed.

The first time I testified before you as Assistant Administrator in June 2002, I said, "Sudan is riding a fine line between disaster and opportunity." The circumstances were much different then. Senator Danforth had just submitted his letter to President Bush recommending that the United States heavily engage in a peace process to end the war in the South. The parties seemed eager and serious about negotiating a just peace settlement. There was tremendous hope for a peaceful resolution to the war in southern Sudan, though this hope was tempered by the reality of the situation on the ground. Bombs were still being dropped on innocent civilians. Humanitarian access was still being routinely denied. *Murajaleen*, or irregular forces of the Sudanese army, were still wreaking havoc on southern Sudanese villages. The parties seemed to be making progress toward peace, but the actions of the Government of Sudan at home were not following the words at the peace table.

The circumstances in southern Sudan are different now. The parties have been negotiating for nearly two years. Bombs have stopped falling, humanitarian access has been regularized, and the reality of a peace agreement seems very close. Unfortunately, a new war has broken out in Darfur resulting in the worst humanitarian disaster in the world at this time, again tempering the hope that seems to come from the peace talks in Naivasha.

Situation in Darfur

The problem that currently dwarfs all others in Sudan is the situation in Darfur. At this time, the goal of USAID is to save lives. For those of us who have worked on Sudan for many years, what is taking place in Darfur repeats a tragic pattern. The most recent episode in this pattern is the 1998 famine in Bahr el Ghazal which was largely the result of denial of access by the Government of Sudan to the region. Many of us still have pictures in our mind of the death that ensued, of the children who melted away before our eyes. And some of us who were intimately involved see many of the same indicators of death in Darfur.

Since May 2003, in Congressional testimony and our regular situation report, we have been raising the alarm about humanitarian access in Darfur. Our Khartoum-based staff have repeatedly sought access to Darfur and consistently traveled there when authorized by the GOS. I traveled to Darfur in August 2003 and have traveled there repeatedly since then. Between the two of us, Administrator Natsios and I have traveled to the region to deal with Darfur not less than nine times in the last nine months. Others from the State Department's Africa and Refugee bureaus have traveled to the region as well. As a result of an escalation in the level of violence against civilians in December, 2003, I traveled in early January, 2004, with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Michael McKinley to assess the situation on the border of Chad and Sudan and to explore possibilities for cross-border assistance into Darfur.

Mr. Chairman, the executive branch has not been quietly watching this happen. As Acting Assistant Secretary Snyder has also detailed, we have repeatedly pressed the Government of Sudan to stop the violence in Darfur and allow humanitarian access since the impact of the conflict on the civilian population became apparent last year. The

President, the State Department and USAID have issued strong statements on the matter. The President, Secretary of State and the National Security Advisor have all raised Darfur in telephone calls with President Bashir and Vice President Taha. Senator Danforth, Administrator Natsios, Acting Assistant Secretary Snyder, myself, and other senior U.S. Government officials engaged with the parties on the southern peace process have repeatedly stressed the United States' concern over the situation in Darfur when meeting with senior Sudanese government officials in Khartoum or Naivasha. Unfortunately, the GOS has chosen instead to pursue a policy of escalating violence and ethnic cleansing against the civilian population, believing a military solution to be its best option.

Our experts have put together a mortality chart, which I will submit for the record. I would like to focus attention on this chart because it shows what we have feared for some time, and especially since the violence escalated dramatically last December. This chart shows why we were raising that alarm and what we are faced with now since we have not had adequate humanitarian access.

Looking at this mortality chart, several points stand out immediately. The threshold mortality rate for an emergency is one person per ten thousand dying everyday from the effects of the emergency. At the time the chart was created, the number of people "affected" by the emergency in Darfur was 1.2 million people. USAID estimates that by June 2004, Darfur will reach three deaths per 10,000 people per day. This is just the starting point.

In a normal year, this is the time when Darfurians finish consuming their crops from the last growing season. They are also preparing for the long "hunger gap." They plant their crops for the new year before the rains begin. Once the rains start, it is difficult to get food, so people use their stored crops and their animals to sustain them through this period. In Darfur, they also typically migrate to other parts of Sudan or other countries to earn cash through this rough period. At the market, they purchase what they could not grow on their land.

This year, however, is tragically different. Water sources have been destroyed and crops burned by the *jingaweit*. The people who have fled their homes have no food stocks, having left with only a few possessions. People who are still in their homes have depleted their food stocks by feeding themselves and their displaced relatives. The livestock, at least the ones that were not looted, were sold for cash. Donkeys, which are vitally important to the livelihoods of rural people, have died in huge numbers, leaving households without the ability to transport water and other critical items. Because of the conflict, the population has not been able to earn cash. Even if they have cash, many markets have also been looted, burned, and deprived of commodities coming into the region. They are now barren and empty. In short, the agricultural cycle for this year has been lost. Even if people no longer feared the *jingaweit* and returned to their land, many would still die because the crops have already been destroyed. If they cannot return before the rainy season to plant, they will have no harvest for the next year.

We have received reports this week that the GOS is now increasing the pressure on internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their villages in time for the upcoming planting season. We too believe people should return, but not without the protection they need. Several reports indicate that some IDPs have been forced back to their villages by the local authorities. Few IDPs express willingness to go back at this time given the presence of armed *jingaweit* throughout Darfur and the traumatic experiences they have already suffered at the hands of these militia. Our staff on the ground believes we will be dealing with significant displacement for at least the next 18 months, as does the United Nations.

It is now May and the rains have already begun. May to September is the rainy season. Logistically, it becomes extremely difficult for food to reach outlying populations in need. Aside from a few major routes, the roads become impassable rivers and communities become isolated. From October to December, the traditional "hunger gap," USAID is predicting that the mortality rate could rise as high as 20 deaths per 10,000 people per day, the same catastrophic rate seen in southern Sudan during the famine of 1998. The cumulative result could be that as many as 30 percent of the affected population, potentially hundreds of thousands of people, would die over the next nine months.

We are doing our best to deploy available resources and, thereby, prevent some deaths. The reality, though, is that adequate humanitarian assistance is not yet on its way. Humanitarian access has improved slightly in recent weeks. One international non-governmental organization (NGO) in particular has begun getting travel permits quickly, but most NGOs, the U.N., and donors like USAID still face numerous obstacles to reaching victims of the conflict with humanitarian assistance.

The Government of Sudan has been slow to allow international presence in Darfur. U.N. assessment teams for both humanitarian and human rights issues finally were allowed to visit in the last week. However, international organizations and NGOs must still wade through three levels of GOS bureaucracy before they can get to their projects. First, NGO workers must obtain visas to enter Sudan. Some NGOs have waited from six to eight weeks.

USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) is deploying this weekend to Khartoum, having waited over three weeks to receive less than half of the 27 visas requested from the Government in Khartoum. After we stressed to the Government the importance of deploying this DART team for the U.S. humanitarian response, the Sudanese Embassy expedited the first half of the visa requests. We hope the outstanding visas requested will be similarly expedited here and in Nairobi.

Second, the GOS continues to impede the access of relief agencies to Darfur once they are in Sudan by issuing travel permits, which are frequently delayed or denied altogether. Third, the movement of relief workers in Darfur remains hampered by GOS requirements for daily travel permits to leave the regional capitals to visit project sites. The GOS customs office also frequently impounds vehicles and holds them for months when they are urgently needed for emergency operations in Darfur.

The denial of humanitarian access over many months has had other cumulative effects. All of these tactics have created an environment where many NGOs are fearful of speaking out because they are afraid of losing any access they may currently have. As well, humanitarian agencies have been obstructed for so long, there are few with adequate capacity on the ground to respond quickly and comprehensively.

Airdrops may be possible, but they are not without difficulties. First, as with other forms of access, they require the agreement of the Government of Sudan. Second, they are extremely expensive. Third, relief workers are still needed on the ground to receive and distribute the aid that is dropped, requiring a system in place to protect those staff. Finally, and most importantly, the recipients of the food aid would still be vulnerable to *jingaweit* attacks.

As you can see, Mr. Chairman, the humanitarian crisis is very complex. There is no one answer to the crisis, but any answer certainly must entail robust international engagement. The cease fire agreement must be fully implemented by all parties, which means the GOS must stop the *jingaweit* and allow an international monitoring mechanism to be put in place quickly. There must be complete humanitarian access to all areas of Darfur. This means bureaucratic processes cannot be allowed to stand in the way of timely humanitarian response. There must be significant funding from all donors and we must have NGOs with capacity on the ground to respond. Finally, we must have a strong and vigorous U.N., which will move humanitarian assistance quickly, demand what it needs from the GOS, and speak the truth.

The U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, and the Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, have both made courageously strong statements on Darfur, as has the former U.N. Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, Mukesh Kapila. We fear, though, that others are not following their lead. In April, the U.N. Human Rights Commission decided not to condemn the GOS regarding its actions in Darfur. Some would claim that the international community communicated through that decision that the United States is alone in its criticism. Others may ask, now that there is a cease fire, why are we still raising the alarm when the worst is over? Unfortunately, we believe the worst is not over yet because the cease fire has never been properly implemented by the GOS. Every day, new and credible information surfaces about continued *jingaweit* attacks, including executions of men and boys in cold blood and rapes of women and girls searching for water or firewood. There are even reports surfacing about mass graves being found.

In February, March, and April, other senior USAID and State Department officials and I spent weeks shuttling between Chad, Darfur, Nairobi, and Khartoum working with the parties to negotiate a humanitarian cease fire. Under the terms of the cease fire agreement signed in Ndjamena, Chad, on April 8, 2004, the GOS is responsible for ending the *jingaweit's* reign of terror against the civilian population in Darfur. Reports of cease fire violations abound, yet there is currently no international monitoring mechanism agreed to by the parties and in place to investigate these reports. We are now 26 days into the 45-day humanitarian cease fire. What is clear is that time is against us.

USAID stands ready. We have 28 of our best people ready to deploy to Darfur. We have our top people in Washington managing the process. We have committed \$76 million already and are ready to provide additional assistance over the next 18 months as more NGOs become active, as access opens up, and as security returns.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, USAID is eagerly anticipating the prospect of peace in southern Sudan, but in the meantime, we are responding to the disaster in Darfur.